

Adapting Men to One Another

A review by Donald R. Roberts, Training Director, J. F. Hink and Son, in the California Training Directors' Association Bulletin of:

"Psychology of Human Relations in Industry," by Franziska Baumgarten, Ph.D., translated by E. D. Nisbet, Pitman Publishing Corp., 2 West 45th Street, New York City, 1950. 195 pages, plus Bibliography and Index.

Psychological research can contribute much toward the understanding of human relations in industry and psychological methods have real use in solving problems which arise involving people, so Miss Baumgarten has undertaken to point out these applications. It is her feeling that "previous publications in this field have been popular compilations, half-thought-out works of *dilet-tanti*, and have either represented a prejudiced point of view or dealt only with certain aspects of the problems . . . A great deal is continually being written about the subject but much of what is published borders on the irresponsible."

Taking into consideration the particular aims of industry, the problem areas seem to resolve into these questions: "In what way can the head of an undertaking ensure that his subordinates shall serve his interests with all their power? It is thus a matter of seeing that the worker (1) makes the interest of his employer his own, and (2) of his own accord makes full use of all his abilities in the service of those interests."

These measures are seen as falling into two main categories: indirect and direct. Such indirect measures as improvement of housing conditions, welfare, industrial hygiene, scientific or-

ganization of work, wages, and arbitration boards affect the workers taken as a whole, so that, "Indeed all the employees of a given undertaking will benefit without distinction from these measures without the operation of any direct personal influence."

Viewed historically, industrial management has arrived at a point where "the head's urge to dominate has remained intact, whilst the readiness of the masses to submit has diminished." Baumgarten feels that the only realistic view now is to regard superior and subordinate in the position of partners. Only by taking this view is it possible to take adequate measures to align this relationship. "Up to the present a fundamental error has been committed by industrial psychological consultants who have formulated rules of conduct expressly for the executive alone, without taking the partner into account, or inversely have recommended the employee to behave in a certain manner, without making him mindful of the executive's personality."

Later in the book this philosophy is expressed again "If we are to make it a condition that the head should treat the employee as a fellow-worker and fellow-being then the same must be required

of the employee; if the head is to regard the employee as a man then the employee should regard the head as a man too. It is therefore right and proper that the employee should adopt an objective attitude towards the head."

Under the heading of *The Reciprocal Relationship* is outlined the normal psychological reactions of superior and subordinate—and then this conclusion: "From this the superior will appreciate with whom he has to deal and how difficult it is for him to approach his subordinate. On the other hand, he should now also be aware of how many tendencies he himself has that may hinder or impair his relations with the personnel."

Every chapter abounds in psychological insights on the most minute matters affecting superior and subordinate. All are discussed so simply that the first reaction is to feel that they are obvious, but second thought becomes appreciation that the author recognized their existence and contribution—and points them out in their proper relationships.

Four central chapters revolve about what the author terms "Critical Factors" in this superior-subordinate partnership. These chapters cover Giving Orders, Supervision, Criticism and Reprimands, and Punishment. These special critical factors are shown as capable of seriously endangering relationships. Especially helpful in this section is the discussion of motives which lead to obedience, and motives which lead to disobedience.

Criticism is discussed in its four elements: substance, form, tone, and circumstances. Belief that criticism is not the prerogative of the superior, but is

a normal human tendency leads Baumgarten to include a discussion of criticism of the superior by his subordinates.

In discussing positions of authority and those qualities which are required by heads, the recurring theme is that superiors must surely possess the positive quality of a social conscience. Twelve psychological types of individuals are discussed who are unsuited to exercise the function of head. The viewpoint is expressed that industrial psychology has failed to give consideration to the psychological effect and possible psychological dangers that being in a position of authority has on the mind of one in such a position. Psychology's contribution has been likewise overlooked, according to the author, in "seeing that the employee is suited to the psychological types of the head and of his future fellow-workers." The chief problem of the future is seen as the "Problem of adapting men to one another." "A new period is approaching, that of the rational organization of human relations in industry. It is foreshadowed by the endeavor to obtain better and fairer treatment for employees."

Although this is essentially a European work, one cannot help but be amazed how they are wrestling with the same problems as we are in this country—and how they think about those problems in the same terms. American students of industry and of personnel will find that all the problems have been set forth in much clearer form than we are accustomed to find them in our own literature. Overtones of the problems are clearly indicated in their various ramifications—whereas we too frequently take them for granted.